Al-Risala 1987

October

2-5 October 1987

Not By Grievances Alone
Indian Muslims' Failure

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

This article was published in the *Times of India* on September 15, 1987.

Over the last forty years, in the context of a predominantly Hindu sub-continent, the Indian Muslims, second in number only to Indonesian Muslims (over 100 million), have nevertheless failed to benefit from their being the largest minority group. Although, at the time of partition, they opted to stay on in India, they failed to make necessary mental adjustments to the new Indian situation. They should have tried to gain a position for themselves in the country by becoming a creative minority, but, sad to say, they failed to prove their worth. They may be the largest minority community, but they have become the most deprived of all groups in the country.

In view of their creed, tradition, history and numbers, the Muslim were certainly in a position to make a major contribution to the life of new India; the saying "in giving we receive" could well have come true for them. But, in order to do so, they needed a period of tranquility; and this could have been possible only if they had unilaterally withdrawn all their grudges and complaints against the majority and risen above the reactionary psychology of the times. But unfortunately, the Muslim leadership failed to give the necessary guidance. As a result, the Muslims were reduced to being a group "with demands"; as such they could not become a giver group.

Moral Stature

The religion of the Muslims gives them enough moral stature to play a real and effective part in tackling the grave problems that India is facing these days. But, to be able to play this role, a "superior solution" (a phrase of Toynbee's) was required. It is thanks to intellectual bankruptcy on the part of the Muslim leadership that no such solution has been found.

A thorough and pertinent analysis of the problem of the Indian Muslims has been made by an American orientalist, Dr. Theodore Paul Wright, Jr., who has been writing exhaustively on the subject for the last 25 years in the most prestigious journals of the world. Dr. Wright's advice to Indian Muslims is "to be as inconspicuous as possible so as not to draw Hindu backlash." He concedes though that "this is very hard advice to follow for a proud people living in the midst of their monuments of glory." He divides Indian Muslims into two broad categories – the "coastal" Muslims and the "inland" Muslims. The latter he calls "monument-conscious," living in the midst of their Taj Mahals and Red Forts and Char Minars–"those who haven't forgotten they once constituted the ruling elite minority." It is significant, he feels,

that “Hindus pay little or no attention to coastal Muslim trading communities,” whereas “the price they (the inland Muslims) pay is very heavy in terms of the riots that occur.”

If Muslims fail to relate to their present situation, it is in large measure due to their emotional development having become atrophied in memories of their glorious past: they had, after all, been undisputed rulers of South Asia not just for a century or two, but for almost a millenium. This, indeed, is the principal underlying factor in the lack of realism which marks a great deal of their own planning for the future. Adverse circumstances having led them to the point where the only feasible course is to take “a back seat”, they are still unwilling to face up to the reality of the situation. Worse/they are misled by their leaders, who keep harking back to the heyday of the Mughal reign and who insist on dwelling upon slights (imagined or otherwise) to the Islamic psyche. In the present context, the paths along which Muslims are directed by popular leaders can only lead to destruction.

The realization has not yet come to them that, from the position of the “back seat”–being under no further obligation to concern themselves with matters of individual or communal prestige – they are free to devote their time and energy to exploiting their own considerable potential. By putting aside notions of privilege and precedence, they can the better educate and develop themselves in consonance with the modern and fast-changing setting in which they now find themselves. It is simply a question of their getting their priorities straight.

In this world, man frequently finds himself between the poles of adversity and opportunity. A prominent businessman once asked the secret of his success, said, “Starve the problems, feed the opportunities,” And my advice to Muslims would be the same. History, after all, abounds in examples of peoples who have successfully risen from the ashes of their dead selves. A case in point is modern Japan. Its denizens, by their own account ‘children of the sun’ genuinely believed themselves superior to all other races, and, as such, within their rights in attempting to dominate other nations. Their slogan was; “East Asia for Japan.” This way of thinking on the part of the Japanese was responsible for their being violent and aggressive as a nation – characteristics which evinced themselves in no uncertain manner from 1937 to 1945, during which period they captured Manila, Singapore, Netherland and Rangoon. But they finally met with the most crushing defeat when their rival, America, dropped two atomic bombs respectively on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus militarily crippling Japan. They were then faced with no other alternative but a ‘humiliating surrender’ (Time, 13 April, 1987).Formerly imbued with a sense of their own superiority, they now had to come to terms with a reality which was given expression to in a message broadcast by Emperor Hirohito on the 14th August 1945: “We have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable.’ On the 2nd of September, Japan signed a document which ratified the supremacy of America over Japan.

Reverse Course

Of course, there had been attempts by military extremists to prevent the Emperor from making this broadcast, and when these failed, "there were a number of suicides among the military officers and nationalists who felt themselves dishonoured," (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,*19/86*).* But, by and large, the people accepted the position which was called by Japanese "reverse course" of a vanquished nation, which had lost not only its recently conquered territories, but also some of its own islands. This did not mean, however, that they had accepted this position for all time. They took the view rather that their stepping down from the position of a world power now gave them, the opportunity to enter upon a period of national reconstruction, during which time none of their previous energy and resources needed to be diverted to the business of confrontation with a stronger rival. In this way, despite the iron grip of the 'war criminal', General Mc Arthur, by temporarily accepting the political and economic superiority of America, Japan was able to give its undivided attention to the fields of science and technology, thereby effecting its own national rehabilitation. In a matter of thirty years, Japan was able to change the whole course of its history, bringing itself from a position of economic inferiority to one of acknowledged superiority throughout the world. Their success in the field of electronics alone has been phenomenal. Even the Americans have started showing a marked preference for Japanese goods because of their superior quality and competitive prices. Inevitably, this state of affairs had proved extremely disquieting for American economic analysts. Pete Wilson, an expert on' American affairs, comments: "The Japanese semi-conductor God zilla is now destroying everything but Tokyo."

After the second World War, Japan had been very much in debt to America. But it was not long before the situation was entirely reversed. In 1986, 26 billion dollars worth of American goods were exported to Japan, as opposed to Japan's exports to America, which exceeded 85 billion dollars. Today, America has, in effect, become the world's biggest foreign debtor, with debts totalling more than $200 billion, while Japan is the world's biggest creditor. (*Time* 13 *April,* 27 *April,* 1987).

A whole spate of books have come out on this issue, one of the most interesting, *Japan–Number One,* having become a best-seller in America.

Strategic Retreat

In this world, n is only those who stop railing against defeat and accept it with a view to doing something positive about the situation who can ultimately succeed. We should never lose sight of the fact that a strategic retreat makes it possible to return to the fray. Such tactics were very well understood by Muslims 1400 years ago when they drew up the Peace Treaty of Hudaybiyyah which, while apparently being over-conciliatory towards the enemy, ultimately permitted the Islamic mission to go forward unhindered.

We must concede that ours is a highly competitive world, one in which success, and sometimes our very survival, is a question of outdistancing others. But, looked at positively, this spirit of competition is the ladder to human progress: few advances have been made in history without the spirit having been predominant. The atomic age would have been ushered in much later had it not been for America's urge to attain world leadership. The electronic age might not have seen such exponential development without the Japanese urge to climb to the top rung of the economic ladder. Conversely, if those who had been left behind had resorted only to complaints and protests, instead of taking constructive action, they would just have been frittering away valuable time and energy, and would ultimately have come face to face with annihilation.

The first step towards taking positive action is to admit defeat and face the realities of the situation. Once that psychological hurdle has been cleared, there is nothing to stop an individual, community, or nation from working towards regaining, or even bettering, its lost position. What must be avoided, at all costs, is sinking irrevocably into a morass of paranoid stagnation. While there is nothing to be gained from pessimism, there is everything to be gainl3d from a positive approach.

6-7 October 1987

Human Potential

The reality of events suggests that human beings are amazingly controlled and resilient in the face of adversity. Perhaps heroism–not panic or shock–is the right word to describe their most common behaviour in times of disaster."

In the Ohio State University of U.S.A. there is a department known as the Disaster Research Centre. It was established in 1963, and so far studied over one hundred different calamities affecting human beings on a vast scale. It was discovered that at moments of crisis, an extraordinary new potential develops in people which saves them from succumbing to disasters and their aftermath. In 1961, for example, Texas was struck by a severe coastal tempest, but less than half of the inhabitants opted to vacate the area. Over 50 percent of them had the confidence to stay on in spite of the storm warnings issued to them four days in advance. Subsequently, in 1971, a big dam was weakened considerably following an earthquake, which seriously endangered the lives of 70,000 people, but at that very critical time only 7 percent of the population chose to leave their hearths and homes.

Such research has also revealed that the victims of such disasters, still maintain high hopes for the future. The citizens of the two affected areas of Texas, having witnessed the destruction caused by horrible floods, were interviewed about what they felt were their future prospects. Surprisingly, less then ten percent expressed apprehension and misgivings. The rest of them, irrespective of the large-scale destruction, were hopeful about their future. The above mentioned institute sums up the report of the research it has conducted on disasters in the following words: "In conclusion, the reality of events suggests that human beings are amazingly controlled and resilient in the face of adversity. Perhaps heroism – not panic or shock – is the right word to describe their most common behaviour in times of disaster.

The Creator has endowed his creature – man – with extraordinary capabilities, one of which is his capacity to plan his life anew with tremendous vigour, even when threatened with total annihilation, Man can do more than compensate for his losses. The discovery of this natural, hidden potential in man serves to teach a great lesson, that is, that no individual, whether singly or as part of a group, who suffers trials and tribulations should ever waste a moment's time in lamenting and grieving over his losses. Instead, he should press God-given capabilities into service to reconstruct his life. It is quite possible that the very circumstances in which he seemed to be heading towards complete annihilation, could serve to unfold a new and brighter phase of his existence.

7 October 1987

The Bigger the Better

> *Always remember that it takes a bigger man to walk away from a fight than it does to stay and fight.*

In his book, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living,* first published in 1948, Dale Carnegie mentions that when he started writing it, he offered a two hundred-dollar prize for the most helpful and inspiring true story on “How I Conquered Worry”. A story written along these lines was sent in by a Mr. C.R. Burton; one of the most significant parts of which we reproduce below:

I lost my mother when I was nine years old, my father when I was twelve. We were haunted by the fear of being called orphans and treated as orphans ... Then Mr. and Mrs. Loftin took me to live with them on their farm. Mr. Loftin told me I could stay there ‘as long as I wanted’, I started going to school. The other children picked on me and poked fun at my big nose and said I was dumb and called me an ‘orphan brat’. ‘I was hurt so badly that I wanted to fight them but, Mr. Loftin, the farmer who had taken me in, said to me: ‘Always remember that it takes a bigger man to walk away from a fight than it does to stay and fight’.

What is meant here by ‘bigger’? In this context it has nothing to do with being taller or stronger, but signifies greater-hearted, broader-minded, and more able than a ‘smaller man’ to sustain injury or insult without losing one’s composure. One’s ‘bigness’ here has to do not with hardihood, but with moral courage.

8-9 October 1987

Moon Mission

In this world of competition it is necessary to enter the, field fully prepared. If you enter it Inadequately prepared, little else but failure will await you.

American Astronaut, Neil Armstrong, stepped on to the moon for the first time in July, 1969. The moment he set his foot on the moon, the control mission in America received these words uttered by him:

“That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”

Armstrong and his two colleagues were selected from amongst the top 30 astronauts of the U.S.A. He possessed to a very high degree all those qualities which were necessary for this difficult, historic mission extraordinary skill in flying, intelligence, strength, ability to absorb information, mental and emotional balance and the courage to accept challenges unhesitatingly. Once selected, he had to undergo rigorous training, for instance, having to remain in deep water for long periods 1: so that he would become used” to weightlessness. So that he could deal with every possible emergency, he did elaborate course in astronomy, space flight, rocket flight, the physics of the moon, etc., all with the help of computerized space data.

The 3100 ton Apollo 11 seemed a giant. It was as high as a 36storey building, having 8 million parts and 91 engines installed in it. On the top was the comparatively small machine, the Columbia, on which the astronauts were seated to set off on their historic journey.

The space machine was duly blasted off, circling the earth for two and a half hours. Then its speed increased to 403 miles per minute and on reaching an altitude of 3000 miles the Columbia separated from the rest of the machines. It was so equipped that the seating space for the astronauts was only as much as in an ordinary taxi. Finally they alighted on the moon from where they gathered 46 pounds of moon-earth, leaving equipment worth 5 lakh pounds behind them. They also left their foot prints on its surface which, hopefully will remain intact for half a million years.

It was only after such highly elaborate preparations that the “small step” could be taken which was going to result in such a “giant leap” for mankind.

At the Olympic Games held in Los Angeles in July-August 1984, about 62 Indian sportsmen participated. When the games were over and they returned to New Delhi on August 16, 1984, they received a chilly welcome, as they had failed to win a single medal, neither gold, silver nor bronze.

What was the reason for this failure? According to a report published in the Times of India (August 1, 1984), “Lack of scientific and systematic training was the main reason for India’s poor showing. We

did our best but that, unfortunately, was not good enough. The training of Indian teams should start before an event and not just three months beforehand".

What has been said about the Olympic games applies to all walks of life.

In this world of competition it is necessary to enter the field fully prepared. If you enter it inadequately prepared, little else but failure will await you.

Your preparation should conform to two requirements: it should be organized and it should be consistent with the standards of the times. If it is not so, you will fail to make your mark and you will be unable to keep in step with modern developments.

9 October 1987

No wrong Answers in the Hereafter

A one million rand (about Rs. 60 lakhs) prize was bagged at a recent TV quiz show, 'Operation Hunger Goldrush' in Johannesburg by a Mr. John Smeddle, although he gave the wrong answer to the final question.

To beat the rest of the 20 competitors and win the first prize, Mr. Smeddle, representing a family team of five, needed the right answer to the last question. Asked to name three of Henry VIII's six wives, Smeddle and his partner, Kingswood college Headmaster Neil Jardine came up with the answers 'Anne Boleyn' and 'Catherine of Aragon'–both correct. But the third name eluded them and, as the precious seconds ticked away, Smeddle turned to Jardine for help, with only a few seconds left. Mr. Jardine answered, 'Jane Grey', which the judges promptly accepted as correct. Now, Jane Grey, the granddaughter of Henry VIII's younger sister, was never married to the English monarch. It was actually Jane Seymour who was his wife. Perhaps because of the similarity of the names, or because of emotionally charged atmosphere the judges erred in accepting 'Jane Grey' as the correct answer. In any case, the prize money was handed over to the team represented by John Smeddle.

So it would appear to be possible in this life to bag the first prize with a wrong answer. But in the life hereafter, no such success will be possible. In that world it is only one who gives all the correct answers who will win the first prize. Those who give wrong answers can expect eternal failure in the ideal world of the Hereafter.

10 October 1987

The Prophet of Islam

It is written in the Quran: “Mohammad is no more than a Prophet: other prophets have passed away before him” (3:44).

This verse shows that the Prophet of Islam, may peace be upon him and God’s blessings, was a prophet like all other prophets. All the prophets brought the same religion to mankind. But there was one all-important respect in which Mohammad, (may peace be upon him) was different from his predecessors: he was the last of the prophets–the final link in the chain. “Mohammad is the father of no man among you, but he is the Prophet of God and the last of the messengers.” (Quran, 33:40). Or as he put in himself: “I, and the prophets who went before me, can be likened to a palace which has been very beautifully constructed except for one brick which has yet to be put into place. I am that brick, I am the last of the prophets.”

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It is important to understand that his being the Final Prophet did set him apart from the others in one essential respect: after him, there would be no one with the status of prophethood to preserve the scriptures and bring the Word of God to mankind. It was imperative, therefore, that there should be a permanent and reliable framework for the preservation of the Book (the Quran) revealed to Mohammad (may peace be upon him) and the continuance by others of his missionary endeavours. The only way of ensuring this was to have political supremacy over his opponents, This was the special reason for which God granted Mohammad (may peace be upon him) and his followers victory over Arabia and the neighbouring countries, thus establishing a government powerful enough to ensure that the final Book of God would be preserved throughout the succeeding centuries, If this had not been so, the enemies of Islam would surely have destroyed the Quran, or changed it so radically that it would have ceased to be the reliable Book of guidance that it was primarily intended to be, As it was, the aims of the Final Prophet were fully achieved and Islam came to occupy a dominant and commanding position throughout a major portion of the world,

11-12 October 1987

Brain Versus Brawn
The virtues of Gradualism

> *History is not made by noise, clamour, public agitation, violence. It is made by the quiet, steady, serious application of superior brains to national and international issues.*

The aim of the Fabian society, established in London in 1883. was to end the economic inequality which was the aftermath of the industrial revolution and to replace the capitalistic system with the socialist. One of the leading lights of this society was George Bernard Shaw, (1856-1950) whose impressive speeches and articles attracted crowds of people to the movement. To further their cause he organised a public procession on one occasion, which consisted mostly of middle class people, but when it reached those parts of London where the prominent capitalists lived, some of the participants indulged in violence and stone-throwing, breaking windows and injuring people.

This very first experiment, having taken the ugly turn that it did, turned Bernard Shaw against processions and demonstrations as methods of functioning. Since it was evidently extremely difficult to make the public restrict themselves to peaceful demonstrations, he agreed that the Fabians should struggle to achieve their aims in other, more orderly ways. Subsequently, the Fabian Society adhered strictly to non-demonstration methods such as the use of the press, meetings, academic research etc. Under the influence of Shaw and other leading intellectuals, they stressed the virtues of gradualism. "The Fabians put their faith in evolutionary socialism rather than in revolution." (CB-IV/20)

To completely eliminate demonstrations as method of achieving one's goal is no easy policy to adopt, however, since it means constantly holding oneself in check, remaining satisfied for long periods with the status quo and being content with the very slow spread of good, new ideas. And, from the point of view of personal success, it means little popularity for the movement and almost total anonymity for its staunchest supporters. The Fabian society could never, therefore, launch a full-scale public movement, and there were members who did, indeed, protest against this policy of non-publicization. But the leaders of the society were firm in their rejection of such arguments for they sincerely felt that the only correct way to proceed was to sacrifice popular glory in the greater interests of the nation.

Although the Fabian society represented only a tiny segment of the British population, (at its zenith in 1946, it had a membership of only 8,500) its thinking had a profound influence upon the intellectual class, and its members went on to become the virtual brain of the Labour Party. When the Labour party came to power in 1945, approximately fifty per cent of its members were Fabians, the most notable being the Prime Minister, Mr. Clement Atlee. None of this had been achieved by public demonstrations.

Prior to 1945, Britain had kept a tight rein on its dominions, the then Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, having gone down in history as saying: “I am not here to preside over the end of the British Empire.” But, thanks to the influence of Fabianism, the Labour Party conceded that the only right and proper thing to do was to give the British colonies their freedom, and that in doing so Britain would gain more than it would lose. In this way, India gained its freedom in 1947, and Britain was able to safeguard its interests in India. If the society itself did not make history it had on the other hand enabled Britain to do so. At the British end, none of this was engineered by taking the matter to the streets.

Mustering a crowd at street corners and in parks by shouting about public issues is not at all difficult. But actually obtaining concrete results in this way is a very different matter, not to speak of its being well-nigh impossible on such occasions, to maintain law and order.

Protest rallies and processions should be seen for what they are-personally motivated stunts which simply make use of public issues for the rapid aggrandizement of egocentric individuals. As such, they are powder kegs to which it is all too easy to hold a lighted match.

History is not made by noise, clamour, public agitation, violence. It is made by the quiet, steady, serious application of superior brains to national and international issues.

13-14 October 1987

You are not Poor, You are Rich

A beggar was calling out for alms on the street. Hearing his call a passerby turned towards him only to find that he was in no way disabled. So he asked how was he entitled to charity. The beggar replied, “I’m poor.” The man said, “No you are not.” You are, on the contrary, very rich.” The beggar pleaded with him not to make fun of him, as he was really poor. The man said again, “All right, give me whatever you have, and in return, I’ll pay you Rs. 50,000.” The beggar happily handed over to him his dirty bag containing a few coins and said, “That’s all I have, you can take it.” The man said. “No, you have much more besides this. You two feet. Give me one of them and I’ll pay you Rs. 10,000 in exchange.” The beggar refused. Then the man said, “You have got two hands, give me one hand, and I’ll pay you Rs. 20,000.” The beggar again refused to comply with his request. So the man said, “You have got two eyes, give me one eye and I’ll pay you Rs. 20,000.” The beggar refused again. The man now said, “Look, you have got two feet, two hands, two eyes. I wanted only one each which together add up to Rs. 50,000. If we set a price on the pairs, it will be one lakh rupees. That means that the price of only three parts of your body is at least one lakh rupees. How can you say you are poor then? You are extremely wealthy. Stop begging, invest this great wealth that God has bestowed on you and you will be reckoned amongst the wealthiest people in the world. God has endowed man with extraordinary capabilities, but, we do not realize their true importance under normal conditions. It is only when we lose anyone of them, then we will learn how priceless it was. Take the case of James Thomas, twenty four years of age and a machine operator by profession. Due to some illness both his kidneys started malfunctioning. He was admitted into the AIIMS, (New Delhi) where doctors told him that the only way to survive was to obtain a kidney from a from a donor. Now, a kidney is a product of nature which cannot be built in a human factory, even if we were in a position to spend millions and billions of rupees to make one. And even after receiving the priceless gift of a kidney although there were no doctors’ or surgery fees, he still needed Rs. 45,000 just to have it transplanted. Here was part of his body which he had never given any particular thought to before, and now its value had been brought home to him in no uncertain manner. *(The Times of India, 10 January, 1980)*

> *Even when man is resourceless, he has a great deal to invest. The body and the brain which we possess are beyond all price. If man exploits his capabilities to the full, there is no success which he cannot attain in this world. For him nothing is impossible.*

In truth, even when man is resourceless, he has a great deal to invest. The body and the brain which we possess are beyond all price. If man exploits his capabilities to the full, there is no success which he cannot attain in this world. For him nothing is impossible. When you have hands to hold things, when you have feet to walk with, when you have a tongue to speak, really you have all that you want in this world. And because everything else can be obtained by material means, there is nothing that is beyond one’s reach.

14 October 1987

Listening for Life in Space

"If you are really there, please call your friends."

Spurred on by the assumption that life forms exist somewhere in outer space, western scientists have been 'listening' for their signals with the aid of sophisticated technology, and space flights also aim, amongst other things, at contacting them. Evolutionists have even extended their theories of the origins of life on earth to include the possibility of its having been sparked off by extra-terrestrial civilizations. This had led to the further assumption that the life forms in space may resemble ours, without necessarily being superior to them and that the notion of a Lord and Creator is inessential to the explanation of life and its origins. But all of this is simply taking us further and further into the realms of science fiction, for, life and consciousness being such unique and exceptional phenomena in the whole universe, they could never have come, spontaneously, into being by themselves. The very fact that they exist is clear evidence of the existence of a living Creator and Sustainer.

15 October 1987

As Clear as Day

It is not only judges who have to decide the rights and wrongs of human affairs, but individuals in all walks of life. Sometimes this is extremely difficult because perhaps not all of the facts are readily available or concerned individuals have suppressed vital information. Sometimes the person who has to settle a dispute is of weak and

Wavering judgement. What then should be done in such a dilemma? The principle laid down by Abu Moosa is perhaps the most helpful in such cases. One of the leading companions of the Prophet, Abu Moosa was appointed Governor of Aden during the Prophet's lifetime. Then, during the rule of the second caliph Umer, he was given the governorship of Basra. Having held such high and responsible positions in which it was his duty to pass judgements every day, which could have far-reaching consequences, affecting the lives of innumerable individuals, he laid down a principle, which is applicable not only to judges but to every human being. He said that a Qazi should not pass judgement until the truth was "as clear as day" to him. When this statement was reported to caliph Umer, he heartily endorsed it, saying that this should be the policy of each and every Qazi.

We can most easily spare ourselves the mischief of others by sparing them our mischief.

If you do not sow seeds at the proper time, there will be no crops to reap at harvest-time.

Do not rail at the darkness. Light a candle and the darkness will of itself disappear.

16 October 1987

BEARING A GRUDGE

The bearing of grudges is an ongoing and limitless pursuit in this world, and not even prophets, let alone ordinary human beings, are spared the asperity of those who harbour resentment. Not even our Almighty Creator is immune to the attacks of embittered individuals who blame Him for the difficulties with which they are beset. God and His prophets become veritable targets for the animosity of such individuals as imagine that they themselves can never be to blame for their afflictions. They reason thus: Either there is no God, or, if there is a God, He is imperfect: how could evil have existed if God were perfect? In this way, they shift the blame from themselves to the Almighty.

Sometimes issues are genuine, and resentment is justified, but, all too often, they are just figments of the human imagination. That is why the *Quran* directs us to make careful inquiries with anything which is said to another's detriment. Only then will it become clear where the blame really lies.

Resentment stems from a variety of causes, superiority and inferiority complexes often being at the root of the matter. It is most common to hear people of superior talents being denigrated by those they excel, the latter being consumed by jealousy and unable to live without the illusions they had always nurtured of their own personal grandeurs. A person of genuinely superior virtue can seldom hope to escape the envy and pettiness of those they put in the shade.

One of the most despicable gambits of jealous people is to make false accusations against those who have outdistanced them on the road to success. In order to retain some sense of their own superiority, they make allegations which detract from the reputations of their rivals; they misrepresent them as liars, cheats, opportunists and so on, hoping that their rivals' disgrace will redound to their own personal credit. What vain hopes.

Rather than stoop to such baseness, the sufferer from resentment should rid himself of his illusions, see himself as he is, accept others and their attainments for what they are, and free himself from the pernicious influence of his own violent animosity.

Defeat, no matter how great, is ephemeral. It can *always* be converted into success by systematic planning.

17 October 1987

Uphold the Faith–but with Understanding and Compassion

The ninth chapter of the Quran makes it clear that "God and His apostle are free from obligation to the idolaters" (9.3) and that the latter are to be sternly dealt with if their breaches of trust, other evil-doing and in particular, their unwillingness to repent so merit it. But in the same Chapter it is said that "God will show mercy to whom He will" (9.27) and the faithful are advised that "if an idolater seeks asylum with you, give him protection so that he may hear the word of God, and Then convey him to safety. For the idolaters are ignorant men" (9.6). In spite of the iniquities of the iniquities of the idolaters, they are to be treated leniently if repentant, their vulnerability is to be used not to extirpate, but to reform them and their ignorance is to be seen as a mitigating factor in any judgment passed upon them.

> *"If an idolater seeks asylum, with you, give him protection so that he may hear the word of God, and then convey him to safety. For the idolaters are ignorant men"*

The Quran leaves us in no doubt that the negativism of enmity should never be allowed to diminish or destroy the opportunity to bring enlightenment to any of God's creatures. Although the Quran says, "Believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you." It also says in the same verse, "Deal courteously with them. Know that God is with the righteous" (9.123).

The wise man thinks well before doing anything. The fool acts first and thinks later.

The past and present may lie in ruins, but the future is still safe.

Life can never be free of unpleasantness. One can only strive to make life pleasant by forgetting the unpleasantness.

18-20 October 1987

Moral Inheritance

Karim Bux was an unpretentious, religious gentleman who lived quietly in a village on a modest income. When he finally passed away at the age of 65, he left no material inheritance worth the name to his family. After his death his eldest son, Rahim, left the village and went to settle in the city so that he could make a living for his family. Whatever meagre resources he had went into the small business he set up here.

Karim Bux may have left no money to his family, what he did bequeath to them was of inestimable value. What he left to them was an ideal-of contentment. Simple living and avoidance of confrontations. By virtue of these things, Rahim managed to make slow but steady progress, despite his initial investment being negligible. His innate desire to avoid clashes was a major factor in smoothing the path for his business to go forward. Needless to say, everyone was happy with him. Everyone helped him in times of need.

> *The most fortunate children are those whose parents leave them a model for principled living. Those who, before leaving this world, have taught their children to have faith in hard work, to avoid confrontation, to remain content, to look forward to future opportunities rather than immediate gains and to adopt a realistic attitude rather than indulge in wishful thinking, have left behind them a moral inheritance that is far more lasting and of much greater value than the greatest fortunes in the world.*

In spite of Rahim's resources being limited, he never lacked credit, thanks to his fair-dealing and his reputation for always fulfilling his promises. Whenever there was any friction, he would pray for anyone who wronged him. Whenever he was tempted to do anything dishonest or unfair, the innocent face of his father would appear before him and he would be keenly aware of, how his wrong-doing would torment the spirit of his poor father in his grave. Such thoughts immediately caused him to dismiss all temptations from his mind and he would regain sufficient mental poise to continue to treat the same path as his father had trod.

Rahim's business may have been a very ordinary one, but such was his courtesy, honesty and selflessness that he could command the same respect and live with the same honour and dignity as a top business magnate.

When his business began to flourish, he felt the need of assistance. So he invited his brothers one by one to come from the village and stay with him. Finally all the four brothers were united. The business, for convenience, was divided into four separate departments, each one being placed in the charge of one of his brothers. For a time they all lived happily together in a joint family although, in their respective spheres, they worked independently of each other.

But after some time, Rahim Bux felt that his brothers were not taking as much interest in the business as they should. At first, only two options appeared to be open to him. Either, as the eldest and owner of the business, he could continue to keep everything firmly in his own hands and remove his brothers from their positions of trust, thus incurring their immediate wrath and unending hostility, or he could allow things to go on as they were and then ultimately face the consequences of allowing a joint-family concern to be irresponsibly run. Inevitably it would mean mutual grievances coming to a head, great deal of bitterness and a final splitting up of the business.

Rahim Bux gave this matter careful consideration for several days, then a third option having become clear to him, he gathered his brothers together and put the whole matter before them. His suggestion was that the best course would be for each brother to become the proprietor of his own department and then to run it independently of the main business. "In this way," he said, "Our father's spirit will be at peace and it is my sincere hope that this will prove a blessing to all of us, for it is only by the grace of God that no disaster has as yet befallen us." All of his brothers then expressed their gratitude and approval and gave him a free hand to apportion the business as he saw fit. After a brief discussion it was decided that the fairest way would be to draw lots for the different department and the distribution was subsequently carried out to the satisfaction of everyone.

All the four brothers then set themselves to their tasks with a will and a way, working hard day in and day out. And now their children have been brought into the business to assist them.

All the four brothers have improved their relationship with one another, being at all times prepared to give unstintingly of their assistance. Although they have all had separate accommodation built for themselves, Rahim Bux still commands respect as the eldest brother, and he can always have his say. The women and children also help one another when the need arises, for they still think of themselves as one big family.

Most fathers think that the best legacy they can give their children is wealth and property. But, in truth, the most fortunate children are those whose parents leave them a model for principled living. Those who, before leaving this world, have taught their children to have faith in hard work, to avoid confrontation, to remain content, to look forward to future opportunities rather than immediate gains and to adopt a realistic attitude rather than indulge in wishful thinking, have left behind them a moral inheritance that is far more lasting and of much greater value than the greatest fortunes in the world. But how many fathers are there who realize this great truth?

20 October 1987

Through Fire and Water

The people who ultimately succeed are those who are undaunted by disadvantageous circumstances, who waste no time in lamenting over them and who give their attention instead to overcoming whatever difficulties they are faced with.

As Dale Carnegie – that most pragmatic of modern thinkers once remarked: “The most important thing in life is not to capitalize on your gains. Any fool can do that: The really important thing is to profit from your losses. That requires intelligence; and it makes the difference between a man of sense and a fool.”

It is seldom in this world that aspirants to wealth and fame meet with nothing but success throughout their careers. Many are the trials and tribulations through which they must pass before they can savour the fruits of their endeavours. The people who ultimately succeed are those who are undaunted by disadvantageous circumstances, who waste no time in lamenting over them and who give their attention instead to overcoming whatever difficulties they are faced with.

The idea of profiting from one’s losses may seem paradoxical, but it is something definitely worth aiming at, whether it be an individual, a group or a nation whose welfare is at stake. It is not, after all, the one who has never had to face any difficulties whatsoever who is necessarily the most successful in life. The truly successful person is one who can carry his ambitions into effect no matter what hurdles he has to leap over. He is the one who will arrive at his destination no matter what obstacles are strewn in his path. He is the one who is prepared to battle through fire and water right to the very end.

21 October 1987

The Greatest Mathematician

Every kind of genius, in fact, is confronted with the awesome feeling that there is a Being greater than himself at work in the universe. It is a measure of his own greatness that he can bow to Another who is infinitely greater.

"God is really another artist," said Picasso, "He invented the giraffe, the elephant and the cat." Einstein once observed that God was subtle, not malicious, and very clever. Sir Michael Francis Atiyah, the distinguished mathematician, said on a recent visit to Bombay that God was a mathematician – not exactly a new idea, since Sir James had seriously put forward the idea – half a century ago that the universe was the work of a mathematician, while centuries before that Pythagoras had come to the conclusion that all things were numbers. The greatest of human mathematicians have come across such complexities in their subjects that they have finally understood the meagreness of their own grasp of the subject. Every kind of genius, in fact, is confronted with the awesome feeling that there is a Being greater than himself at work in the universe. It is a measure of his own greatness that he can bow to Another who is infinitely greater.

Those who do not recognise the signs of God throughout the universe are spiritually blind, and those who see them, but still do not believe in God, will suffer from a warping of the soul which will leave them morally stunted for all of their lives. God conveys His message in innumerable ways, but it is only those who are genuinely receptive to it who will receive His eternal blessings.

Small vessels fetch little water. Likewise, the small in heart fall short of success.

Think before wreaking vengeance. That vengeance will be returned with a vengeance.

If someone pelts you with stones, do not quarrel with him. Try rather to raise yourself to such a height that the stones cannot reach you.

He who craves a high position without effort wastes his life in attempting the impossible *(Ali).*

22-23 October 1987

The Greatest Adventure

Thor Heyerdahl, the world-famous Norwegian anthropologist, once conceived the idea – highly novel at that time – that the Pacific Islands could have been populated centuries ago by aboriginal peoples who could have arrived by sea from the South American continent. But since it is over 4,000 miles from the West coast of South America to the nearest island, his idea did not gain currency. It seemed unlikely that such early peoples could have had any craft sufficiently seaworthy to carry them such an enormous distance, or that they could even have developed the skills to steer themselves in the right direction, let alone survive the innumerable hazards which must have beset them in the vastness of the ocean, such as encounters with whales, sharks, giant squid etc., not to speak of high winds, rough seas and violent storms. But Hyeyerdahl was convinced that his idea was well-founded because of the racial mixture and their cultural artifacts which he had observed on these islands and because there was a strong ocean current – the Humboldt – constantly flowing westwards which could have assisted small ships or rafts to cross the ocean. Now the only thing left to do was to prove it to the world by making the journey himself in the kind of vessel that was used by the pre-Inca peoples.

He had seen ancient drawings of rafts made from huge, but very lightweight Balsa* log with a large sail and adjustable centre boards used for steering which went vertically down into the water. He reckoned that a raft of this construction would allow huge waves to pass over it without sinking it, for the water would run off at the sides, or drain through between the logs, and that it would serve better than a boat, which would fill up with water in a storm, or even capsize. Rafts like this were no longer made, so Heyerdahl decided to have one constructed to the exact dimensions shown in the old drawings, using balsa wood from Ecuador.

But this was clearly a voyage which he could not make on his own. So he sent out an appeal for men to join him who would be interested· in such an unusual and hazardous expedition. In an incredibly short time, he found himself with five eager crew-members, all from different walks of life, who were willing to join him out of a keen sense of adventure.

Their raft – the Kontiki – set out from Callao in Peru on the 28th of April 1947 and, after a marathon voyage of 101 days at sea, reached the Raroia Reef on the 7th of August. They had their hair-raising adventures on the way, like their early forerunners, but all miraculously survived to *tell the tale, and the annals of anthropology are the richer for it today.

* The Balsa tree which grows in South America is highly valued for the lightness and strength of its wood. Nowadays this is the wood used to make model aeroplanes.

* See Thor Heyerdahl's book, *Kon-Tiki* which gives a vivid account of their adventures

It is exactly such keenness, such courage, such selfless zest for adventure which Islam is so much in need of today. The Islamic Centre may have every good intention of bringing the truth to the unenlightened through *Al-Risala* and other publications, but it is essential that zealous individuals should come forward to form a 'crew' with the same bravery, enthusiasm and willingness to cooperate as Heyerdahl's men. They should have the same willingness to relinquish the material things of this life in order to bring the true message of Islam to the peoples of the world.

The Muslim world today is engaged in all manner of activities but it has sadly neglected the all-important task of propagating the faith. To accomplish it, one must be ready to rise above the tangible gains of this world and think only of the intangible blessings of Paradise, for that is God's promise to those who valiantly come forward to struggle for His cause.

23 October 1987

Islamic Thought in the Ascendant

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite nations. (Revelations, 19:15)

Of the New Testament verses which foretell the coming of the Prophet of Islam, this one is of particular significance, for it makes it clear that the Final Prophet will stand up for his religion; not by wielding a sword of steel, but by using the weapon of words; his strength will not depend upon metals extracted from the earth, but upon his own utterances, it will be the idealogy of Islam which will vanquish nations.

This prophecy was fulfilled in the lifetime of the Prophet, for with the Word of God that was revealed to him, he was able to take the greater part of the known world by storm. Islam's secret of success is the ascendancy of its though, and that is something which can never be defenceless. Even when they seem quite powerless, they will have supreme might at their command.

Today the power of the Word of God can still work wonders, provided that it is conveyed by the followers of Islam in the same manner as the Prophet and his companions did.

24-31 October 1987

A Journey

In November 1985 the President of the Islamic Centre, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, attended an Assembly of the World's Religions held in New York. Representatives of a large majority of the world's religions, both great and small, took part in this Assembly. The Assembly was organized by the International Religious Foundation and its aims were designated as Spiritual Unity and World Peace.

It is a long way from India to America-about 20 hours by air-and 1985 had been the worst year ever for air accidents in the entire history of civil aviation. Whereas over the previous 20 years the average annual death-toll had been only 900, by August of that year, there had been no less than 22 air crashes resulting in the loss of 1698 lives. On June 23, 1985, a disaster involving an Air India air-liner, which claimed 329 lives, occurred on the very same route which our aircraft was about to follow. I knew that according to the Hague Protocol, the next of kin of those who perish in air accidents are entitled to $20,000 dollars compensation. But, somehow, this thought did little to soothe me. When I took my place in AI flight number 104, I felt, therefore, as if I were setting out on a dangerous journey. Then I remembered the words of John Shedd, that "A ship in harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are for."

Parting of the ways

On the outward journey, the aircraft reaches New York via Bombay while the return journey is via London. When we reached New York we had the illusion that it was our first halt, Bombay, all over again – only on a much larger scale. These two cities, in fact, are similar in that a few centuries ago they were both tiny settlements on the ocean shore, both grew enormously, Bombay becoming the financial capital of India, and New York the financial capital of the world. They have been like two runners in a race who started from the same point, but with one for outdistancing the other because of more favourable concatenation of events.

Counter productiveness of politically motivated action

I happened to glance at an advertisement aimed at Air India's first class passengers in the November-December 1985, issue of AI's in-flight magazine *Namaskar.* One of the facilities listed was: "A selection of the finest wines and liqueurs." (p.52) It crossed my mind that prior to independence, India's freedom fighters used to picket liquor-shops, with students of Arabic madrasahs also coming to Delhi to join in the picketing. They regularly put forward religious and moral arguments against alcoholic drinks but their action, in fact, had nothing to do with religious strictures on the consumption of alcohol. Its true purpose was purely to show how evil the British were and to increase popular aversion to them. This was

the reason, after the end of British rule in India, for the increase in the consumption of alcohol without there being anyone in evidence to picket against it. Movements which are launched on the basis of such political motivations only end in an increase in social evils, no matter how noble the name initially attached to them is.

Real and relative thinking

After a seven-hour non-stop flight from Dubai, our aircraft touched down in London. This part of the journey had proved extremely boring. Reflecting upon this, I imagined what would have happened if, a thousand years ago, anyone had said that he would make the journey from the Middle East to England in just seven hours. Far from contemplating the tedium of the journey, people would have thought it as some kind of miracle. And if they had actually been put in a carriage and transported as promised, they would have felt, when they were arriving at their destination, that they had only just taken their places- the interval of time would have seem so short to them. Yet, in this jet-age, seven hours seem like a lifetime. Man usually thinks in relative term, but has the illusion that they are real terms.

The burden eased

Imagine our mental distress then when it was announced that the flight from London to New York would take seven hours, having found the Dubai-London flight of the same duration so intensely boring. Yet, astonishingly, the time spent on this flight passed with the greatest of ease. When the Captain announced, “We are about to land in New York,” we found that the seven hours had passed in what seemed like seven minutes. And the reason? Most of this journey had elapsed while we were asleep, unlike the Dubai-London trip during which we had been wide awake. Our slumbers, in fact, were only disturbed before landing, when a member of the cabin crew announced: “Please, fasten your seat belts”. So sleep had come to our rescue,

“…sore labour’s bath,

Balm of hurt minds, great nature’s second course,

chief nourisher in life’s feast...”[1]

in other words, that amazing blessing which God has given His servants for their rest and recuperation.

1. Shakespeare: *Macbeth,* Act II, Scene I.

Impressions of America: Superficial Affluence

In 1928, Herbert Hoover assured his countrymen that his government would very quickly put an end to poverty in America. But between 1929 and 1932, a severe economic depression set in, during which five thousand banks closed down and the purchase of industrial produce was suspended. One third of

the population of America fell a victim to unemployment. The depression, therefore, was caused by diminished purchasing power rather than by a paucity of goods to buy. That is why there was the extraordinary situation of people going "hungry while fruit, vegetables and grain were in abundance. Houses were unheated while coal piled up in mountains."

Immeasurable changes have taken place since then, and Americans are visibly affluent. But this affluence is artificially bolstered, with more than 50% of the population owing money to banks. Almost every individual here possesses a credit card which enables him to buy cars, television sets, houses etc., on credit. This facility has encouraged everyone to raise his or her standard of living and has led people to live beyond their actual means. Because the loans people take are subject to interest, most of the population owing money to banks spend their entire lives paying back the interest on their loans and frequently leave this world with their debts still unpaid.

The Government of America is in much the same situation, and, in order to maintain the supremacy of the dollar, it pays high interest rates on it, thus encouraging investment in American banks. The resulting impression is one of broad-based economic abundance-which is totally artificial. Were investors to withdraw their money from American banks, the U .SA would become a pauper nation overnight.

Arrangements for the conference

To accommodate the delegates to the Assembly, the entire Americana Great Gorge Resort in New Jersey was reserved for one week. The arrangements made for the participants were excellent and since this was a religious conference, the conference guide book made discreet mention of the fact that alcoholic beverages would not be provided.

The Conference opens

The inauguration of the Assembly took place on the evening of November 15, with more than eight hundred people present in the spacious modern auditorium. The delegates came from no less than 85 different countries and represented nearly all the major and minor religions of the world. It is worth mentioning here that a World Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in 1983, which was attended by Swami Vivekanand, who had travelled by sea from India and had undergone much hardship to be present. He had not been invited to this conference, but had gone there solely out of personal enthusiasm. It was, therefore, with great difficulty that he was admitted and given permission to deliver an address. He began his speech with the words: "Sisters and brothers of America ..." and, ninety years ago, this was a correct assessment of the composition of the audience, because most of the participants were, indeed, from America. The present conference was, in tremendous contrast, having representatives of every religion from all over the world. It was, therefore, heartening to hear the President of the conference begin his address with: "Sisters and brothers, from south and north, east and west."

Making use of English

Just one language was used in this conference from beginning to end and that was English. Accents and pronunciation differed, just as creeds and wearing apparel did, depending upon which part of the world the delegates hailed from, but the language remained quite intelligibly English.

If English is used on such occasions, it is due to the dominance of English culture, and one of Great Britain's first concerns had always been to make English a universal language. With Great Britain's loss in status as a world power in the twentieth century, this might not have been possible, had it not been for America stepping into the breach and perpetuating the use of English in every corner of the globe. This common use of English, once a matter of national or class prejudice, is now a necessity in the smooth operation of national and international affairs and in global cooperation. If we think of its use as a form of elitism, we are missing the point of its broad utility and, in protesting against it, are wasting much valuable time. If, on the contrary, we regard its use as an aid to everyday functioning, the universality of English will strike us as a positive blessing. Making it possible to address all the inhabitants of the world in one single language, it will kindle within us the very spirit of dynamism which is so essential to world unity in the present age.

Freedom of expression

The participants in this Assembly held in New York were all of different religious denominations, but they all stayed in the same hotel, ate and drank together, had informal conversations with one another and assembled under one roof to hear what the others had to say. All this took place without the discussions being marred by a quarrelsome tone or the adherents of the religion being treated in a prejudiced manner by those of another. I too conversed with people of religions other than Islam, but I never came across any sourness, nor did the conversation ever take an unpleasant turn.

Here we have a completely new phenomenon, for it is only in our own times that it has become possible for people of diverse religions to gather together in a serious frame of mind and listen to what the others have to say without anyone losing his temper. This coming-together of religions was out of the question in former times and we should recognize that this remarkable feature of our age gives us a new-found opportunity to acquaint others with the teachings of our religion. As an opportunity, it is unparalleled.

Diversity of religions represented in the conference

For the purposes of this conference, efforts had been made to bring together people of every religion. There were, for example representatives of the tribal religions of Africa, idol-worshippers whose chiefs, in accordance with their exotic beliefs, brand their faces with hot irons, which leaves an ineradicable mark on them for the rest of their lives. In great contrast were the heads of some of the other religions who lived an ultra-modern life, driving around in their Rolls Royces and flying in their own personal jet

planes. But, if there were idol-worshippers at this conference, there were also the God-worshippers. There were some who worshipped the spirit, and some who did not believe in anything of the nature of a God.

Islam in comparison to other religions

At this gathering we heard speeches both for and against God and religion. The following utterance of different individuals will illustrate the diversity of viewpoints expressed:

The God of the theologians is dead.

I am a Buddhist, there is no God for me.

Life is nothing but a chemical process.

There is no other God than Truth.

Religious people are God-centered people.

I have no belief in God, but I do profess faith in the spirit of Man.

Man, ethically, is an end in himself.

The main aim of religion is peace and happiness.

Were the conference to be summed up from an Islamic point of view, the main objective of religion as subscribed to by the majority of the participants, would emerge as personality-building. The representatives of Islam, for their part, went one step further in saying – with almost total unanimity – that what distinguishes Islam so clearly from other religions is that it is aimed, not just at the individual, but at complete social revolution. Personally, I do not subscribe to this view, for I consider the real target of Islam to be the individual, not society. If social change is to come about, it must happen indirectly as a result of individuals changing themselves. I thought it best, however, to refrain from airing my views in the presence of representatives of other religions. Such public disagreement would have done little to benefit our cause. I did, however, attempt to put my point of view before them in private, for such an interpretation of Islam as theirs obscures the fact that that very personality-building, which is the stated aim of other religions, is likewise the aim of Islam.

The difference between Islam and other religions is not one of completeness and incompleteness, but of authenticity and the lack of it. Islam is an authentic version of divine religion, the scriptures of which are preserved in their original form, while other religions, once divine in origin, have become corrupted over a long period of time. In their underlying purpose, there is no difference between Islam and other religions, but for its fulfillment, Islam is today the only reliable source, the other religions having lost their reliability.

Alterations in and additions to the true essence of religion eventually bring about a change in its basic character. The Hindu religion, for example, considers self-betterment to lie in self-realization, whereas,

according to Islam, the secret of human fulfillment lies in realization of God. According to Christianity, human fulfillment is dependent upon acknowledging God's Prophet as being the Son of God, whereas Islam says that human fulfillment comes from acknowledging God's Prophet as a bearer of His message. Buddhism, for its part, searches for the source of moral sensitivity in this world, whereas Islam holds that moral sensitivity is created by the belief that we are accountable for our actions in the next world. Some religions maintain that to build the human personality, one must believe in the truth of all religions, whereas Islam holds that there is only one truth, the discovery of which will set one on the path to self-betterment. According to yet other religions, man reaches perfection after passing through lengthy stages of life and death, whereas Islam says that this is a world in which man is being tested, and that, on the basis of his actions in this life he will be rewarded or punished after death.

Because of the transmutations which have taken place in other religions, the Word of God-so-called-has completely changed in complexion, while in Islam, the Word of God has remained preserved in its true and original form. Islam may be adopted with full conviction of its authenticity, but the adoption of other religions is like attempting to derive knowledge from later editions of a book which have gradually become erroneous throughout the ages, when an authentic edition of the original book is still readily available.

Impressions at the United Nations

On November 18 we were all taken to see the United Nations building in New York. Outside that vast UN headquarters stands a tall statue presented to the UN in 1959 by Soviet Russia. It is of a powerful man using all his strength to strike a sword with a hammer, thus exemplifying the peace-loving wish expressed in the legend:" we shall beat our swords into * plowshares".

*American spelling of 'Ploughshare'.

On June 24, 1945, fifty nations came together to form the United Nations Organization. Now the number of member countries has reached a total of 160. According to its original charters, its purpose was to rebuild the world devastated by the Second World War, to create an environment of peace, security, progress and mutual respect and to set up an International Order of nations. But forty years of United Nations, history have passed without this organization having been able to accomplish any of these aims. Of all the hundreds of conflicts erupting among nations during this period, the U N has not succeeded in settling even one. Today, the UN, far from representing the fulfillment of human aspirations, is a graveyard of human hopes. How easy it is to erect a statue showing swords being turned into ploughshares, but how difficult it is to make this happen in actuality.

Song and recitation

On the evening of the same day, a session of the Assembly of World Religions was held in New York, in the Metropolitan Baptist Church. The session concluded with a programme of alternate recitations from the Bible and gospel singing.

The songs were rendered by a soloist introduced to us as the "best Gospel singer in the world."

At the Hotel Americana where the Assembly delegates were staying, the representatives of every religion made a practice of reciting from their own Sacred Books. For example, on November 9, Muni Sushil Kumar gave a reading from the Scriptures of the Jain religion. Excerpts from the Holy Books of Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Zoarastrianism and other religions were also recited. On hearing these, I weighed them up in my mind with the recitation of the Quran, and the latter appeared in every way so greatly superior and so vastly more attractive that there was really no comparison. This is because the wording of all the other scriptures is human in origin, while each word of the Quran is divine. Recitation of the Quran, therefore, makes a greater impact and is of an attractiveness not to be found in any other scriptures. The Quran is indeed a unique work whose art cannot be rivalled by any other book in the world.

(To be continued)

31 October 1987

Cutting Man to Size

The Government of India plans that the former Prime Minister's house shall be maintained as museum so that people may come and pay their tributes to the memory of the most powerful woman in the world – who died a martyr.

The great irony of this death is that not all the power in this world was able to prevent it. At that moment of horrendous slaughter, one saw in Mrs. Gandhi, not a mighty leader at the pinnacle of international fame, but a poor, frail, helpless victim whom nothing and no one could save. It mattered naught that she lived in a splendid mansion, was possessed of unparalleled political power, was heavily guarded night and day, was looked up to by millions. She was dead by the very weapons which should have been used to save her life; and in the end, her lot was worse than that of even lowliest beggar or the poorest outcast of society.

From this we should learn the lesson of humility before God. No power on earth can keep us alive if it is God's will that we die. No power on earth can interpose between us and Our Maker on the day of judgement. No memorials erected by human beings will alter one whit our onward course towards heaven or hell. No human intercession will cause the slightest wavering in the judgement of our Divine Creator.

Letters

I have received your magazine AL-RISALA, and have been impressed with its quality. May Allah give you success in this venture.

ZAHIR AHMED
California, USA

Our Managing Director Mr. Tamal Kanti Ghosh is happy to receive your monthly publication AL-RISALA. Hope we shall be receiving it regularly every month.

AR SIDDIQUI
Allahabad Patrika
Allahabad

I would be grateful if you would send me copies of your respected magazine AL-RISALA to me.

EDWARD WITNERS
Tyldesley, U.K.

I read a copy of AL-RISALA-and really enjoyed reading it.

MS. ZARINA PATEL
London

This note is to acknowledge and say 'thank you' for sending to us at Delhi Bible Fellowship your monthly publication.

I have read thoroughly your magazine. Perhaps sometime we can meet and be able to mutually discuss religious matters.

ROBERT REID
Delhi Bible Fellowship
New Delhi

I studied a few old editions of AL-RISALA. In a very first time itself this small magazine provided a great aliveness and inheritance in my eternal devotion towards Almighty. Every sentence of it got its significant appeal to surrender upon divine teachings. We, not only myself but all, must be thankful to you for your, this type of endevour to make Islam more popular and understandable.

MOHAMMAD NAVSHAD
Indian Air Force

Thank you for sending a copy of AI-RISALA. I wish you well in your work, and in your publication AI-Risala.

PC JOHNSTONE
Oxford
U.K.

We acknowledge receipt of AL-RISALA No. 42. This issue recently added to the IAC library holdings & if possible we look forward to receive the collection of the back issues.

A HALEEM EL-HASSAN
Islamic African Centre
Khartoom, Africa

Thank you for the copy of AL-RISALA which Ms. Shirlay Stadel Lofer has shared with me.

Best wishes in all your work.

HENRY 0 THOMPSON
Barrytown
USA